

I. INTRODUCTION

Downtown districts of many cities across the country are making a comeback. Following decades of neglect and misfortune brought about by the rapid flight of people, cultural resources, and money to the suburbs, **downtowns are beginning to re-establish their rightful place as centers of commerce, civic identity and distinct urban experiences.** As a society, we are utilizing innovative smart growth, transportation, infill development and community-building techniques to regenerate urban cores. We are reshaping how we live, work and play in our urban areas – and how we think of our city centers.

BACKGROUND AND PLANNING PROCESS

Downtown Stockton is in the midst of rebirth. Many public sector revitalization projects have been completed, and the private sector has rediscovered Downtown as place of commerce and economic benefit. However, given the recent success of Downtown revitalization projects, many issues remain to be addressed. Recently, the City Manager determined that a team approach was necessary in order to address the remaining issues. The manager's goal is to keep the momentum of Downtown revitalization alive, and create a sense of urgency regarding the implementation of the City Council's goals and priorities for Downtown redevelopment and economic prosperity.

In May 2001, the City Manager formed the **Downtown Action Team (DAT)**. The DAT is comprised of City and County officials, Downtown Stockton Alliance, Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce and representatives from the development and business community. The DAT's goals is to form an overall vision for the future of Downtown Stockton, create a set of key revitalization strategies, and identify top priority implementation actions on which to focus.

STRONG FOUNDATION: AN ALL-AMERICA CITY

The City of Stockton has a strong foundation for the ongoing revitalization of Downtown. In 1999, Stockton was designated an All-America City by the National Civic League for its strides in crime reduction, new job creation, improvement of the Delta's environment and Downtown revitalization efforts. This May, Forbes Magazine ranked San Joaquin County among the top 25 percent *"best places in America to do business and advance a career."*

In addition, the City has developed programs to support, communicate and coordinate with the local business community. These efforts ensure that the economic future of Downtown – the bedrock of City center revitalization – is strong and prosperous.



Aerial of Downtown Stockton

The Downtown has numerous existing assets and a unique urban fabric that distinguishes it from the surrounding suburban areas. A strong government center, entertainment and cultural activities, retail services, infill development opportunities, nearby residential neighborhoods, historic design and character, a strong street grid system – the mixture of these diverse components creates a liveliness unmatched elsewhere in the City and holds great potential for re-invigoration.

This transformation of Downtown Stockton, however, is not without its challenges. Images – and realities – persist of Downtown as a place lacking a lively nightlife and a vibrant retail-shopping street. While Downtown is currently easy to access, new growth and revitalization activities planned for the area will greatly strain existing parking stock. In addition, stronger linkages need to be created within the Downtown and with adjacent areas.

FUTURE DIRECTION

If Downtown is to truly capitalize on its assets and address its challenges, the City must modify and strengthen its position as a primary force for change in the City center. This document outlines a vision for guiding the future of the DAT and Downtown, as well as a comprehensive and focused set of strategic actions by which the organization will achieve these objectives.

REGIONAL CONTEXT

Located in Northern California's Central Valley, Stockton lies 90 miles east of the San Francisco Bay Area and 40 miles south of Sacramento. The City is situated between Interstate 5 and Highway 99, two of California's principal freeway arteries, and encompasses 56.6 square miles. The 12th largest city in California, Stockton's population reached 243,771 in the year 2000. Contiguous to the San Joaquin River Delta, Stockton hosts the largest inland port in California and serves over 1,000 miles of waterways designated for boating, fishing, water skiing and sailing.

As the County Seat of San Joaquin County, Stockton is the primary government, cultural, entertainment, and recreational center of the region. Economically, the Stockton area benefits from its close proximity to the Bay Area and the rich agricultural lands and agribusiness industries of the Central Valley.

Development in Stockton's outlying areas directly impacts Downtown. Suburban shopping malls, inexpensive housing, plentiful parking and large new office parks capture resources that might otherwise be spent in the City core.

The Action Team and its partners continue to explore ways to focus the region's energies back to the traditional center of urban life and activity in Downtown Stockton.



Location map of Stockton

OBJECTIVES OF STRATEGIC PLANNING

Strategic planning is **a process of identifying a community or organization's strengths, challenges and opportunities, and successfully planning for the future.** The result of strategic planning is a framework for decision-making and the allocation of limited resources to achieve the goals set forth by a community.

The **Downtown Stockton Strategic Action Plan** provides strategic implementation steps for the near term. It details the action team's ideas on what needs to be done, how to get there, and who is going to make it happen. Importantly, this Strategic Action Plan is a working document. It is a dynamic tool with built-in flexibility that will evolve with the Action Team and Downtown as they grow and change in the coming years.

The goals of this strategic planning process are to:

1. Build upon existing planning efforts and align future visions and goals of all major stockholders;
2. Identify top priorities (projects and programs) to achieve the desired vision for the future;
3. Identify key steps toward successful implementation of the priority actions; and
4. Develop mechanisms for assessing the future progress toward implementation of the priority actions.



The Action Team's strategic planning process in 2001 created a set of key strategies for the future development of Downtown Stockton.



ORGANIZATION OF THE PLAN

This document provides an overview of the Downtown Stockton Strategic Action Plan, the process by which it has developed, and the framework for its continued successful implementation. Important to note, however, is that the Action Plan is not static. Over time, priorities shift, objectives and strategies change, and new developments will impact the social and economic dynamics of the region and the Downtown as a whole. Therefore, this Strategic Action Plan is a working document. It is a dynamic tool with built-in flexibility that will evolve with the City as it changes and grows over the coming years.

The Strategic Action Plan document is organized into five principal sections. Following this introduction, Chapter Two provides an **Overview of Downtown Stockton** today, including the array of assets and challenges identified during the planning process that will impact Downtown development in the coming years.

Chapter Three outlines a **Strategy Framework for Downtown Revitalization**, including Top Strategies, Strategic Framework and Performance Targets. It also includes the Downtown Development Concept, which outlines physical structure for organizing activities, relationships, land use patterns and connections in the Downtown.

Chapter Four presents the **Detailed Action Plan** with its specific goals, strategies and actions for the categories outlined in the Strategic Framework.

Finally, Chapter Five addresses the recommended steps toward effective **Implementation** of the priority actions and the overall Strategic Action Plan.